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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4240
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0454
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4857
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0711
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0506
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0735
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4439
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2729
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0750
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7525
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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0295
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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND PM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN WANTS TECHNICAL, NOT PERSONNEL HELP
WITH KAGAN DISASTER ZONE

REF: A. TASHKENT 860
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 862

Classified By: Political Officer Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On August 4 Charge d'Affaires, U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) experts, and representatives from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs met with Deputy Minister of Defense Rustam Niyazov and other officers from the Uzbek Ministries of Defense and Emergency Situations to discuss potential U.S. assistance in the wake of the serious explosions at a munitions depot in Bukhara Province. Niyazov was repeatedly stated that the highest priority is for equipment and that Uzbekistan already has an experienced cadre of sappers ready to secure loose rounds of ordnance. The Uzbeks want a maximum of five U.S. Army trainers to conduct training but were clear that U.S. personnel will not work near the blast site. Niyazov was surprised that the Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement can provide long-term solutions to eliminate excess ammunition supplies and decrease the risk of a repeat explosion incident elsewhere in the country. Despite Niyazov's stated desire for the team to arrive with all requested equipment at once, we believe they will be satisfied when a substantial number are available for delivery.

"We Have Plenty of Sappers"

[1](#)2. (C) On August 4 Charge Butcher, U.S. Army EOD experts, and representatives from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs met with Niyazov and a group of Uzbek officers from the Ministries of Defense and Emergency Situations to discuss how to proceed with offers of U.S. military assistance in the wake of the Kagan munitions depot explosions (reftels). Niyazov stated multiple times that the Uzbek military has a sufficient, qualified cadre of sappers to do the job and that the real problem is a lack of equipment. Disposal work is

already underway, Niyazov noted, but "many sappers are sitting around doing nothing" until they obtain proper equipment to do the job effectively.

13. (C) Niyazov reiterated the Government of Uzbekistan's request for just two U.S. military personnel to train Uzbek counterparts on the use of land and water detection equipment. He later conceded that a maximum of five U.S. trainers would be allowed to work in Bukhara, but indicated that a broader team of 10 (including support staff) was unnecessary. "We'll take care of everything," he added, noting that the Uzbeks are prepared to offer lodging, meals, medical care, transportation, and other logistic support. Niyazov also clearly stated that no U.S. personnel would work in dangerous areas near the blast site itself; rather, they would train Uzbek specialists in using the U.S. technological equipment and stay out of harm's way.

Come Soon, But Bring All the Equipment

14. (C) U.S. Army experts confirmed to Niyazov that personnel are ready to travel to Uzbekistan immediately with initial assistance that includes three underwater detectors (for rounds strewn in canals) and 10 land detectors. Niyazov, however, flatly stated that this was "too little," instead suggesting that the U.S. Army team of up to five arrive with all 150 of the requested detectors at once. They would like EOD suits as well, but seemed to understand these may not be immediately available. He agreed that a military flight directly to Bukhara Airport to deliver the equipment made

sense and would not be a problem, which would eliminate the need to pass through Tashkent and arrange onward ground or land transport of the equipment. As for visa support, Niyazov said "it will take me five minutes...no problem."

State Department Can Help, Too?

15. (C) Representatives from the Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement described the possibility of long-term assistance to help Uzbekistan avoid a similar disaster in the future by eliminating other potentially unstable stockpiles of ammunition. Niyazov was interested and said he was unaware such a program even existed; he was surprised that the Department of State would administer a weapons abatement program and urged the visitors to personally inform Minister of Defense Ruslan Mirzayev at a meeting in Kagan on August 5.

Comment:

16. (C) It appears the Uzbeks would prefer a more limited assistance package than we initially proposed. Their insistence that all 150 detection devices arrive simultaneously likely reflects a concern that if the U.S. Army team arrives with just 13 then the subsequent quantity will never arrive. We believe that once a critical mass - perhaps half - of the devices are ready that the Government of Uzbekistan will happily facilitate the team's arrival. Nonetheless, the team will propose the full package during the August 5 meeting with Defense Minister Mirzayev and Bukhara District Commander General-Major Kabul Berdiyev in Kagan.

BUTCHER